

# FATHERHOOD NEWSLETTER

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June is men's health awareness month, and "wear blue day" is June 18th, the day when businesses, government agencies, sports teams, and others are asked to wear blue to raise awareness and education about men's health. That includes the need to seek regular checkups, or testicular cancer education, prostate cancer education, depression screenings, and other health issues that affect men.

## Please connect with us!

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## Take care of your mental health this men's health month

3 "Suck it up", "Boys don't cry", "man up". These aphorisms have been around for quite some time, and unfortunately pervade the mindset of a lot of men who grew up hearing these things. 3 Many years after the origin of these sayings, there is still a significant difference between women and men in willingness to seek out mental health care. This applies to mental health as well as physical health. A recent CDC study looking at 2020 data shows that while 25.6% of women had received any mental health treatment, only 14.6% of men had received any treatment for their mental health. Their definition of significant treatment was defined as having taken medication for their mental health, received counseling, or both in the past 12 months. Looking among the groups of men who received any treatment, this percentage was even lower for Hispanic men (12.6%), and lowest for Non-Hispanic Asian men (7.7%). It's time to break free of the stereotypes that "strong men don't need help". Let's start a new aphorism about what makes a man: "Real men look for real help".

## Father's day gifts that aren't about golf or grill

Often it seems like father's day gifts can be broken down into gifts that are either related to playing golf or grilling. As a dad who doesn't really do either myself, here are some father's day gift ideas for dads that might be a little less typical.

1. **The Expectant Father, by Armin Brott and Jennifer Ash Rudick:** I remember being worried about not knowing what I didn't know as a new dad. This book has some great information about how to support the mother during the pregnancy and labor, and what to look for in your new baby's development
2. **AeroPress Go Portable Travel Coffee Press** One thing that will always be true is that new babies don't sleep well. Dads who are coffee drinkers will appreciate the portability of this coffee press which makes 2-3 cups, is light-weight and travels easily
3. **REI Co-op Trail 40 Pack** Although built as a day pack for hiking, this backpack can be great as a stealthy diaper bag that has more than enough space for all of your baby gear



## Make Music Day Sulphur

Every summer Sulphur joins 1,000 cities around the world in a celebration of music. Make Music Day Sulphur is a musical celebration that is volunteer-led and has participation from novice to professional musicians of all ages. This is a free event open to all ages. The event will take place at the downtown Sulphur plaza, 300 W Muskogee Avenue in Sulphur, Oklahoma on June 21 from 3:00 to 10:00 pm. You can event sign up to participate as a musician in the event through the site <https://sulphur.makemusicday.org/>



## New dad tool for your toolbox for June: How to Play with your month-old baby<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Try the **"Human Mobile"**

- A. Find any 2 light, small, loopy toys
- B. Take shoelaces and cut enough string to make a pair of 5-to-6 inch loops
- C. String a single loop through each toy and tie to secure.
- D. Now place the loops around your ears and position yourself so the toys dangle down in your baby's face.
- E. Act as though you are a mobile and let your kid bat at the toys (and your face) while you make noise every time the connect.

**Why is The "human mobile" a good way to play with your baby?:** This game gives your new baby practice with coordination of their hands, making sounds when they connect with your face or the toys teaches them "cause and effect"

### 2. **Talk to your baby**

It might feel silly at first talking with a baby when they can't yet talk back and their vision is only a few feet from their face, but even at this early stage their brains are sponges soaking up this interaction and these conversations will build their vocabulary faster than you can imagine. You might be surprised to know that there's also no need to "talk down" or "baby talk" to your baby.

Using proper grammar and real words are just fine, you may just want to use a higher pitch and slower speed.

### 3. **Tummy Time**

Tummy time is time your new baby spends on their stomach to help them build muscle groups in their neck, back, shoulders, and core. Spending 3-5 minutes (or until you can tell they are tired of it) on their stomach while rolling a colorful and/or noisy ball towards them, shaking a rattle near their head can encourage them to work on their neck muscles. Always make sure you are near so this time is supervised.



**Caring Dads Have Different Brains<sup>2</sup>** In a 2020 study in the UK, researchers invited 66 fathers and their children (ages 5 and 6) to solve puzzles either together or by themselves; and while they did so they had special head caps on for functional near-infrared spectroscopy (fNIRS). This cap would show whether or not the fathers and their children's brain were "in sync" during the puzzle solving. Afterward, they then scanned their brains with an MRI to see if the hypothalamus showed any changes. This is because the hypothalamus plays an important role in parenting and caregiving. Lastly, the study asked the fathers to complete two questionnaires on the "role of the father". One of these assessed how strongly they believed they were capable of being a good father, and the other asked how much they enjoyed spending time with their children. It turns out that the researchers found that when the fathers believed they were capable of being "good fathers" they were more likely to be in sync with their children in putting the puzzles together. Additionally, the dads whose MRIs showed their hypothalamus to be larger, the more frequently these dads indicated they enjoyed spending time with their kids. So it may be that these positive beliefs produce better fathers.



## Need Resources?

Throughout the state you can call 211 or go to <https://www.211oklahoma.org> for help with housing, food, utilities, mental health, transportation, COVID-19 information, or other needs.



## REFERENCES

- 1 Coleman, P. (Retrieved 2022). <https://www.fatherly.com/health-science/how-to-play-with-your-1-month-old>. How To Play With Your One Month Old Baby (The Tarantino Edition)
- 2 Long, M., Phulmann, L., and Vrticka P. (2021) Hypothalamus volume in men: Investigating associations with paternal status, self-reported caregiving beliefs, and adult attachment style. *Social Neuroscience*, Dec;16(6):639-652.
- 3 Terlizzi EP, Norris T. Mental health treatment among adults: United States, 2020. NCHS Data Brief, no 419. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. 2021. DOI